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STATEMENT OF CONGRESSMAN ED CASE OF HAWAII TUESDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2005

RECOGNIZING CENTENNIAL OF SUSTAINED IMMIGRATION FROM THE PHILIPPINES TO UNITED STATES AND ACKNOWLEDGING CONTRIBUTIONS OF FILIPINO-AMERICAN COMMUNITY

Mr. Speaker, colleagues and fellow Americans, aloha and mabuhay.

I rise today to provide richly deserved recognition in the Halls of our Nation's Congress for a great people and culture whose century-old journey on our shores has personified the very essence of our American experience. I speak in strong support of H. Con. Res. 218 which I introduced with the co-sponsorship of many like-minded colleagues to recognize the centennial of sustained immigration from the Philippines to our country and to acknowledge the incredible contributions of Filipino-Americans to our country over the last century. And I do so with great pride and deep humility as the representative of the congressional district with the most Filipino-Americans and the State with the largest percentage of Filipino-Americans nationally and with sincere gratitude to my cosponsors, to Government Reform Chair DAVIS and Ranking Member Waxman, to the gentlemen from Utah and Illinois, and to our collective leadership for bringing this measure to this floor expeditiously.

Mr. Speaker, those whose heritage lies in the great archipelago of the Philippines have journeyed to our country and lived among us for centuries. But the modern day Filipino-American immigrant experience which has given rise to our current day Filipino-American community traces its roots to December 1906 when 15 Fili-

pino contract laborers, or sakadas, arrived from Luzon aboard the ship Doric and began work in the sugar cane fields of Keaau on the Island of Hawaii.

In the same year, the first class of pensionados arrived from the Philippines to gain an education with the intent of returning home, although many stayed on.

These early sakada and pensionado roots sparked a sustained emigration from the Philippines to the United States which, over the last century, has numbered upwards of 60,000 a year, marking Filipinos as our second largest immigrant group from the Asia-Pacific region. Many continued to emigrate to Hawaii to work in the sugar fields. The Hawaii Sugar Planters Association records reflect over 125,000 immigrants from the Philippines up to the year 1946 alone, and they form the base of today's 275,000 Filipino-Americans living in Hawaii, well over 20 percent of our total population. As previously noted, it is not just my State which has benefited from the growth and maturity of our Filipino-American community, which now numbers 2.4 million nationwide, including 1.1 million in California alone.

But it is in Hawaii where the full extent of the trials and tribulations and accomplishments and successes of Filipino-Americans has played out

over the past century. Early generations worked long and back-breaking hours to bring the means to bring their families to Hawaii. And then those generations fought for basic rights and benefits on the plantations of Hawaii. And then they began to move beyond the plantations into other aspects of Hawaii society and to take advantage of the equalizing opportunity of education. And then those generations who benefited from the foundation of their forefathers built a broader base in the political, economic and social fabric of Hawaii until, a century later, the successes, both individually and collectively, are everywhere.

Just some of the past few decades in Hawaii alone: Benjamin Cayetano, Governor; Benjamin Menor, Mario Ramil, and Simeon Acoba, justices of the Hawaii Supreme Court; Daniel Kihano and Robert Bunda, speaker of the Hawaii State House and Senate, respectively; Angela Baraquio, Miss America; Antonio Taguba, general, United States Army; Eduardo Malapit and Lorraine Rodero-Inouye, mayors; Emme Tomimbang, TV news anchor; Benny Agbayani, professional baseball player.

These are just some of the more recognizable names, for Hawaii's Filipino-Americans are succeeding like their mainland counterparts throughout the full range of our society, from our military where Filipino-Americans have demonstrated decades of bravery and loyalty to our country and have one of the highest enlistment rates, to the professions, entertainment, business and well beyond.

Last weekend, Hawaii's Filipino-American community and its many admirers and friends kicked off a yearlong celebration of its centennial under the leadership of the Filipino Centennial Celebration Commission, Elias Beniga, chair. This weekend, we will dedicate a marker to the original sakadas at Keaau, where it all began. And nationally, our Smithsonian is undertaking a yearly celebration as well, titled the Filipino American Story, a Century of Challenge and Change, with commemorative events, exhibits and educational opportunities here in Washington, D.C., and at other sites nationally.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure that neither the original sakadas nor many who followed them here could have envisioned what the last century reaped for them and theirs, nor that we would all stand here today and over the next year to commemorate an incredible century, nor that we would collectively look forward with such eager anticipation to the story our Filipino-American community will write over the next century. Yet that is exactly what we are doing and should do for this is the story not just of Filipino-Americans, but the story of our America. Mahalo, dios ti agnina, and salamat po.